

## From the Editors

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This issue is the first of the 10th volume. To celebrate this milestone the editors organise a conference on the theme ‘Ethical Theory and Moral Practice: How Do They Relate?’ which will take place in Amsterdam on March 19 and 20 2008. You can find further information on the conference website <http://www.integerleven.nl>.

The issue opens with the results of a study into the role of imagination in moral reasoning. Drawing on empirical research, Mark Coeckelbergh and Jessica Mesman show how imagination aids medical practitioners in neonatal intensive care units in demarcating moral categories, tuning their actions, and exploring long-range consequences of decisions. They show that moral imagination is an aid, but cannot replace the decision itself.

The NIMBY attitude is claimed to be typical of a person who accepts a risk generating facility, but only if it is sited elsewhere so that someone else has to bear the risks. This attitude is generally morally disapproved. However, Hélène Hermansson shows that views on the justification of exposure of an individual to a risk in terms of the benefits to the larger population, depends on the kind of risk area. Arguments that are acceptable in one area are seen as repulsive in another area. She argues that individuals have a right not to be unfairly exposed to risks as well as a right to fair compensation.

In his *Discourse on Methods* Descartes states that commitment to some antecedently determined principles of decision-making is necessary for the conduct of his life. Commentators have called these principles Descartes’ ‘provisional morality’. It is said that, while engaged in philosophical inquiry, Descartes disclaims belief in that which is not evident and since the maxims of his provisional morality do not seem to meet this requirement, he would be committed to disclaiming belief in them. In his contribution, Adam Kadlac argues against this view.

During election campaigns, politicians are eager to show how ambitious they are and what ambitions they have. Machiavelli, Harrington, Locke and Rousseau each considered ambition to be among the greatest threats to political security. Still it has seldom received more than a few paragraphs worth of analysis in the works of philosophers. Glen Pettigrove aims to provide a long overdue analysis of the concept. The first part of the paper explores what ambition is, offering a more precise account of ambition than has been offered heretofore. The second part deals with the question of ambition’s normative status.

Lisa Rivera's aim in her contribution is to reconsider Bernard Williams' critique on impartial ethical theories. In his arguments about integrity and meaning he wants us to see the deep significance of projects that give our lives integrity and meaning and he claims acknowledging this significance will make us doubt the reasonableness of certain moral obligations. Rivera argues that, although somewhat unconvincing, Williams' point does not disappear when we consider ethically serious people with defensible ethical projects. Ethical projects often shape and determine our choices, and the fact that I am living *this* life and pursuing *this* project may make me believe it is necessary to give up many things of critical importance.

Jonathan Webber's contribution carries us back to the subject of moral imagination. Research into trait attribution has shown, according to some authors, that our ordinary characterological understanding of the people around us arises from a misleading heuristic and is consolidated by a cognitive bias. The traditional philosophical employment of intuitions, thought-experiments, and literary narratives to ground claims about character should be abandoned in favour of exclusive reliance on experimental psychology. Webber argues that this view is not supported by the experimental investigation of trait attribution.

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